Communicating during a crisis: Misinformation and disinformation

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Ronald Musizvingoza, PhD

Researcher, United Nations University Institute in Macau



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Session Outline

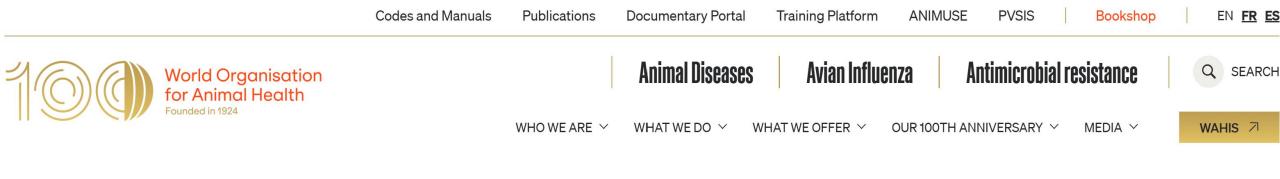
1. Understanding Misinformation and Disinformation

- **2.** How Misinformation Spreads
- **3.** Impact of Misinformation and Disinformation
- 4. Strategies to Counter Misinformation
- **5.** Communication Plan Interactive Activity



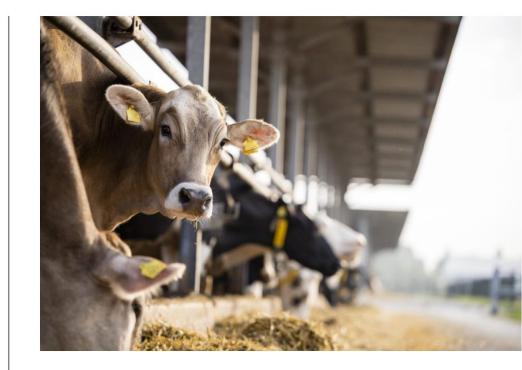
Key Concepts

- **Disinformation:** False or manipulated information deliberately spread to deceive or cause harm.
- **Misinformation:** False or misleading information shared without intent to deceive.
- Infodemic: An overwhelming surge of information (accurate or not) during a public health crisis.
- Mal-information: True information used maliciously to harm individuals, groups, or nations.



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Article The next big threat to animal health emergencies: misinformation and disinformation



Example: Lumpy Skin Disease

In October 2022, viral online content spread false information about the spread and treatment of lumpy skin disease in cattle.

This misinformation led to conspiracy theories that undermined vaccination efforts and falsely suggested that milk was unsafe to drink.

Lumpy skin disease: Viral cattle disease sends rumours flying in India



Why People Share Misinformation

Emotional Impact

- Fear/Anxiety: Evokes strong emotions, prompting rapid sharing.
- Anger/Outrage: Drives engagement as a form of expression.

Entertainment

• Engagement: Shared for fun or attention

Political/Ideological Goals

- •Sway Opinion: Influence, discredit, or mobilise.
- •Disrupt Processes: Intentional disruption, e.g., elections.

Economic Gain

•Profit Motive: Spread for ad revenue or financial benefit.



How Misinformation Spreads

Fearmongering as a Catalyst:

- Fearmongering involves spreading exaggerated or false claims to evoke fear and urgency in the public
- Exploits emotional responses like fear and anxiety, encourages rapid sharing as individuals feel compelled to warn others or seek solutions.

Conspiracy Theories as a Manipulative Tool:

- Conspiracy theories propose secret, often malicious, plots behind events, offering simple explanations for complex issues.
- They thrive in environments of uncertainty or mistrust, especially during crises.



Techniques Used to Spread Misinformation

Impersonation

• Using fake identities or profiles to lend credibility to false information.

Fake Experts

• Presenting unqualified or fabricated individuals as experts to support false narratives.

Emotional Language

• Using morally charged and emotional words like "fight," "evil," "greed," or "punish" to grab attention and encourage sharing.

Misleading Visual Content

• Using emotional or out-of-context images and videos to evoke strong





Ronald Musizvingoza is 😔 feeling depressed. Just now · 🔒

Greedy corporations are putting our lives at risk by not disclosing the true dangers of the avian flu. Protect your family and boycott poultry products! Anti-vaccine groups are right! The avian flu vaccine is just another way for big pharma to make money. Don't fall for it! #CorporateGreed #AvianFlu #NoVaccine por 📢

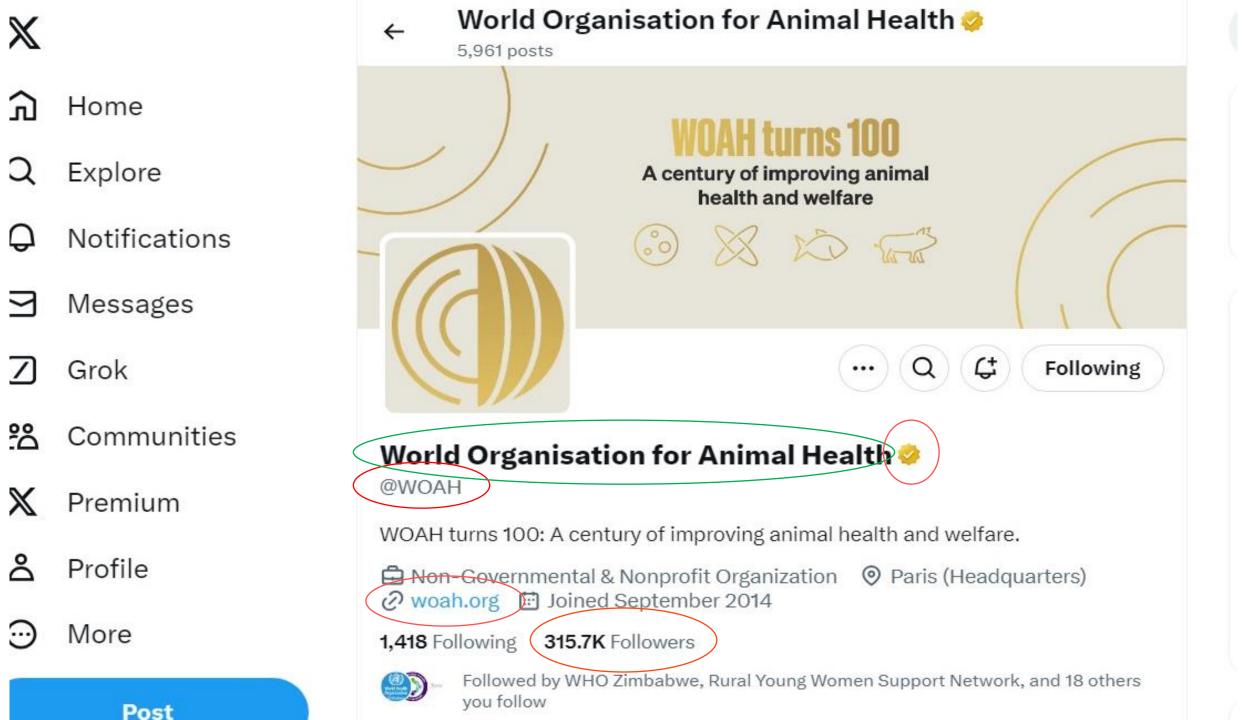
John Doe @DrJohnDoe14 · 46s

Dr. John Doe, a renowned health expert, says the avian flu is more dangerous than the government admits. This is what's happening in our farms right now. The virus is out of control, and the government is hiding the truth! **#HealthRisk #AvianFlu #CoverUp**









Social Media

Rapid Information Dissemination

- Enables instant, global communication.
- Acts as a key information source during crises.

User-Generated Content

- Anyone can create and share content.
- Quality control is limited; content is often unverified.

Amplification & Virality

- Algorithms prioritise sensational content, leading to virality.
- Trending topics amplify both accurate and false information.

Social Influence

- Likes, shares, and comments serve as credibility indicators.
- Influencers can sway public opinion, amplifying both truth and misinformation.



Al's Role

Amplification of Information

- Al algorithms prioritise engagement, promoting emotionally charged or polarising content.
- Content with moral-emotional language gains higher visibility and reach.

Personalization & Echo Chambers

- •Al curates personalised feeds, creating filter bubbles that reinforce confirmation bias.
- •Limits exposure to diverse viewpoints, fostering polarisation.

Creation & Spread of Misinformation

- •Al generates deepfakes, manipulated content, and fake news.
- •Bots amplify misinformation, mimicking human behaviour to influence public opinion.

Double-Edged Sword

• Al tools detect and flag false information (e.g., awareness campaigns).





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Anna Kaufman

18, 2024 Updated 1:17 p.m. ET Nov. 18, 2024

Al chatbot convinces woman to euthanize her dog. No, this isn't a Black Mirror episode

By <u>Sanya Jain</u> 💥



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Get Started

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Social and Economic

- •Panic buying, market disruptions, and trade restrictions due to rumors.
- •Example: False reports of a swine flu outbreak causing farmers to cull healthy livestock, leading to economic losses.

Erosion of Public Trust:

- Loss of confidence in veterinarians, health authorities, and government protocols.
- Example: Farmers refusing vaccinations for livestock due to misinformation about vaccine safety.

Compromised Crisis Response:

- Confusion and fear hinder cooperation during outbreaks.
- Example: Resistance to quarantine measures for infected herds due to distrust in official directives.

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Strategies to Counter Misinformation

Proactive (Preventive):

- Pre-bunking campaigns to educate communities about misinformation tactics before they occur.
- Building relationships with trusted voices (e.g., local veterinarians or community leaders).

Reactive (Responsive):

- Debunking false claims with evidence-based corrections as soon as misinformation surfaces.
- Amplifying accurate information through authoritative and relatable sources.



Tools for Combating Misinformation

Social Listening Platforms:

- Track trending topics and detect emerging misinformation in real time.
- Monitor platforms like X, Facebook, and WhatsApp groups for misinformation affecting communities..

Trusted Sources:

- Centralize and promote reliable information hubs for farmers and local communities.
- Disseminate verified information via official websites, SMS, and radio broadcasts..

Collaborating with Influencers:

- Leverage the reach of respected figures such as:
 - Veterinarians, agricultural officers, and community leaders.
 - Local influencers on social media to amplify accurate information.



Activity: Crisis Scenario

Goal of the Activity:

Work in groups to create a clear and actionable communication plan to counter the spread of misinformation in this scenario. Use the techniques and strategies discussed earlier, and explain why you choose specific approaches **Objectives:** What is your main goal?

- Target Audience: Who needs to hear your message?
- **Key Messages**: What are the main points you need to communicate?
- **Communication Channels**: Where and how will you deliver your messages?
- Action Plan: What actions will you take, and when?

Evaluation: How will you measure success?



Thank you

United Nations University Institute in Macau Organization Musizvingoza@unu.edu https://unu.edu/macau

https://twitte r.com/ronald mussi



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